1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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waku and his clan; (2) the strength of the far-off waku's clan; (3) the near waku's having a number of wives and no younger brothers; and (4) the possibility that the waku may want to go without wives. There are two cases of this last on record. The old men usually try to get a man to marry and marry properly. Not only is their personal pressure felt by a man who does not wish to marry, but the whole impact of society is placed against him in hundreds of direct and indirect ways. It would be a strong man with an intense dislike of women who could retain his bachelorhood against such odds.[12]

The reader may assume from this account of illegal unions that marriage is a very unstable institution. Such is not the case. Although love affairs are common, a lifelong marriage either of a galle mielk to one dué, or to him and his younger brothers through the levirate, is the normal thing. Murngin society could not exist were this not true.

From the cases of unfaithfulness and the mechanical manner of acquiring spouses through the relationship of the parents, conjugal love might appear impossible. Although rare, it does exist. The ideal wife and husband are those who remain faithful to their spouses; on the other hand, a promiscuous woman or man is disapproved of even though not openly condemned.

To illustrate a man's affection for his wife: Mun-yir-yir had had a magically powerful totemic string given him to keep preparatory to its being placed upon another's totemic emblem. No woman may see or even hear of such a thing. His galle was burning bush for bandicoots. The fire burned and destroyed the string. All his clansmen and those of the man to whom the string belonged were extremely angry. Women had been killed before for such an offense. An old man said

[12] Occasionally one hears accounts of a number of unmarried men collecting in a group of five or six, going out into the jungle with one woman and having group sexual relation with her. One woman I knew of had done this several times; the people severely disapproved of her. She seemed a woman of insatiable sexual appetite and was continually in trouble because of it. She also seemed to stimulate all the men sexually and had a greater interest for them than some of the other women who might have been obtained. Sometimes a youth who is having an affair with an older woman will tell his friends and have them accompany him to his assignation. The other men remain back when they arrive. According to one of the accounts given me, the woman says, "Who is with you?" He replies, "My friends." She says, "Do not bring your friends, I only like you, I only want to have you." The boy says, "No, they are my friends. I'll have you first, then they can." She objects, and he says, "But I feel very sorry for them. Maybe if you don't play with them they will come use black magic on you." He keeps on talking like that and the woman listens and agrees to his proposal. There seems to be considerable evidence that what is called nymphomania among modern women also exists among these aboriginal peoples.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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dred men, more than half of whom have not reached the age of sixteen. This leaves approximately seven hundred men who are looking for mates among the same number of women. The statistical average of wives to one middle-aged man is three and one-half. Part of the discrepancy between the total numbers of married women and men is accounted for by the fact that women are taken in marriage just before they reach the age of puberty; although sexual intercourse is not indulged in until after puberty, the women otherwise are treated as wives. A second factor in establishing the unequal ratio is that men up to the age of twenty, and frequently to twenty-five, are without wives or have only one wife; they must wait either for the action of the levirate or for some of the younger females to mature. The two factors just named as expressions of the disproportionate sexual ratio in marriage do not account, however, for a sufficient number of women to make up the difference. The killing of young men below the age of twenty-five, because of the ever-present blood feuds, makes up the balance.

The one important effect of warfare on Murngin society is the seasonal slaying of a small proportion of young men who have passed adolescence and are potential or eligible mates.

In the summary of men killed in battle the writer recorded about one hundred deaths in the last twenty years caused by war. These figures obviously do not include all of the deaths from this cause. There are none recorded for the people south of Caledon Bay and only a few for those around Wessel Island and the English Company Islands, where heavy fighting has always taken place. It would be safe, on the basis of population, to add another hundred deaths to the figure above, making a total of two hundred men killed. Since each man averages three and one-half women, these men would have appropriated seven hundred women of the available supply, or, in terms of the present situation, the tribes needed seven hundred women less than they would have, had the men lived.

Warfare, then, is one of the mechanisms on which polygyny is based. If war were abolished, the percentage of men would increase, and the pressure on the social structure created by seeking mates would probably be too strong for the present form of polygyny, with its attendant mechanisms, the levirate and sororate, to survive. Since these latter mechanisms do much toward strengthening the society and preventing chaos attendant on the transfer of a woman from one clan to another, it will be seen that warfare, while destroying one type of

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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Marriage and Relationship

578 595 In the social life of the people polygamy is generally practised, some men having as many as eight wives. While a good deal may be said in justification of this practice among a nomadic people, such as these aborigines are, it is a very fruitful cause of trouble and strife. This is occasioned by the jealousy which older wives frequently feel toward their younger tribal [589] sisters, and also by the fact that, because of this system, many young men of marriageable age are unable to obtain partners. This latter fact, not unnaturally, leads to the stealing of women and general breaches of the moral laws of the tribe.

562 627 672 684 One, to us, highly unjust custom is to punish a woman who has been stolen, even though she has been taken away by force, much more severely than the man who has stolen her. In most cases she is, when recovered, badly speared or beaten, in some cases so severely treated as to be killed, while the man who has taken her, unless he occupy a prohibited relationship to the woman, is usually let off with a severe lecturing.

627 684 Generally all the relatives of the wronged husband who are present will join in this brutal chastisement of the woman, their action being justified by the fact that they "feel sorry" for their fellow-tribesman. Perhaps experience has proved the value of this method of controlling domestic relationships.

582 584 Marriage, as previously indicated, is regulated by the social organisation of the tribe. There are only certain men of the opposite moiety who are eligible to become the husband of any particular girl or woman. To one of these men the girl is given in infancy, and, though this man has nothing directly to do with her until she reaches the age of puberty, he is required, during the years of her infancy and girlhood, to fulfil certain obligations, such as the making of presents of food, weapons or utensils, to her father.

[585] Because of this custom, there is nothing approaching a ceremony of marriage among these people, the girl during infancy as really belonging to the man as she will later on when he actually 587 768 takes her to wife. When a man dies, his wife or wives immediately pass over to one or more of his tribal brothers, so that, excepting in the case of a few very old women, there are no widows, and there are no orphans in this aboriginal community.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

disease, scarcity of food compels the occupants to look for fresh sites.

Well-defined tracks link food-gathering areas and meander in or around jungles and along swamps and creeks wherever there is good hunting. Accompanied by a couple of aboriginal families and a few boys, I followed one of these tracks for about forty miles to where a distant horde had migrated. Men went ahead with their spears, and the women followed with young children, family possessions, and food-gathering dilly-bags. Every little while there was an outbreak of squealing from the women and yelping from the dogs, as a bush rat or other animal was dragged from a hollow log or tree. Occasionally a woman darted off from the track and some miles farther on rejoined the party with a bundle of edible roots or yams.

By sundown we left the bush and came out on a sandy beach on the northern shores of Port Bradshaw, and men and boys were soon lying on the sand waiting for the women to prepare the camps, dig in the sand for fresh water, and cook the shellfish. Once the food was ready, the women took it to their husbands, who shared it with unmarried companions. Darkness comes quickly in the north, and married men settled down with their wives and children around their separate family fires, whilst the unattached males discreetly camped some distance away. Unmarried men always separate themselves from family groups, and any visiting males temporarily without wives stay with the bachelors. Not infrequently married men determine where the bachelors' camp is to be made, and with vivid memories of their own youthful and indiscriminate ways, rigorously enforce this segregation. In the bush, ever-courteous nomads reserved a place for me beside the young men's fire, but never anywhere near a family group, although the youths have sometimes been strangers and the married families well known to me.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

touch it, or for his brothers to do so either. The night was hideous with their quarrelling, and though the brothers attacked the old man with their spear-throwers, he loudly proclaimed the tabu and the youths dared not eat the meat.

Sexual intercourse is accepted as a natural function, not to be affected by proximity to the family circle or to other families camped a few feet away, nor yet by occasional unseemly interest from the young men's camp. Even in east Arnhem Land, where a strict morality is outwardly enforced, intercourse is little less than promiscuous, and it is not to be wondered at that most youths laughingly admit their *affairs d'amours*, and that women frequently make the initial advance—though secretly for fear of their husbands.

To prevent irregularities, married men enforce a number of prohibitions, and unmarried and unattached men are segregated in a camp by themselves at a reasonable distance from any family. A woman is not allowed to eat food presented to her husband by a youth, in case he should consider her to be under an obligation to him, and if a youth wishes to share his food with a married brother, he must not go to his camp but must call him over and give it to him.

In many relationships it is unlawful for a man and woman to greet each other, and when I have asked for a name, I have often been greeted by evasion or silence, simply because no one present was allowed to utter the name. Brothers and sisters may not look at each other when speaking, but talk with averted faces. A man converses freely with his wife, mother, daughter, granddaughter, and niece; but when speaking to other relatives he averts his face, and not being able to call them by name he draws their attention by an ejaculation or by saying: 'I wish to

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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CHAPTER NINE

Hordes at Home and at War

616 1173 An aboriginal myth says that tribal and social laws were made by spirit-Ancestors. Spirit-Ancestors wandered through the country begetting the first aboriginal children and instructing them in secret ceremonies, sacred songs, and dances. These first-born nomads were divided by the Ancestors into two great Dua and Yiritja moieties, and today a Dua man can marry only a Yiritja woman, or vice versa, and all children belong to the father's moiety.

616 624 This rule applies through the family to the numerous small hordes, for the horde is an enlarged patriarchal family in which the men and their children are members of one of the moieties, and wives and mothers belong to the other. Unmarried adult daughters and sisters are unknown in any [589] horde, for they are bestowed in childhood to become wives in hordes of the opposite moiety.

617 582 Each moiety includes four marriage-groups or subsections; the total of eight forms the framework of a marriage and social system. To obtain a wife, a man theoretically considers whether he is Dua or Yiritja; a Dua man invariably marries a Yiritja woman. The problem is further complicated in that he, being Dua, belongs to one of the four Dua marriage-sections and therefore not only marries a Yiritja woman, but a woman who must be from one of its four marriage-subsections, although marriage into a specified second section is allowed. Children of this union take the father's Dua moiety, though they will not belong to his marriage-subsection, nor yet to the mother's, but to another indirectly determined by the mother's.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

152 628 spearing any wandering nomad they may have chanced upon.

578 Camp quarrels are fiery and frequent, and everyone joins in on the slightest provocation. An imaginary slight, perhaps a small irregularity in food distribution, or the frequently organized female attempts to annoy a bachelor by accusing [589] him of making advances to married women, are enough to arouse resentment and inflame the emotions. Physical violence is usually preceded by a noisy battle of wit and the 578 exchange of abuse. Over forty commonly used abusive 195 epithets range from ingenious and witty references to male and female genital abnormalities to the calling into question of the integrity of parents, as well as that of future generations. It is also common to threaten to leave a man's bones to rot in the grave instead of removing them for decent [765] burial in a burying post; the formal curse is: 'May your bones rot before they can be lifted for interment.'

Every possible, impossible, and imaginary physical irregularity, ranging from the ludicrous to the obscene, is applied to the genital organs of both sexes, and all the references are shouted in the open camp. A favourite obscene remark is that an opponent's eyes, ears, and mouth are filled with placenta; a short abusive term accuses a woman of harlotry and describes fantastic intimacies on her part, whilst a man can have similar cryptic charges hurled at him.

Milder references are made to big eyes, knees, elbows, and sunken eyes; bones are said to be solid and lifeless like stone, and eyes and ears are described as blunt. Minor scornful phrases used by mothers to children include the impatient exclamation: 'Your fingers are thumbs'; arms and legs are said to be awkwardly long, the neck to be short, the head to be sitting on the shoulders.

578 Despite his emotional temperament, Stone Age man has artificial methods of arousing a display of temper. If he feels that he has been slighted and wishes to vent his grievances,